

*“About the emperor Nikephoros and how he leaves his bones in Bulgaria”: A Context for the Controversial Chronicle of 811*

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TWO TEXTUAL FRAGMENTS relating events of the ninth century have, until recently, been attributed to the same “unknown writer,” known after the Latin title given to the second fragment as “Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio.” The first fragment recounts the disastrous campaign of 811, launched by Emperor Nikephoros I (802–811) against Krum’s Bulgaria. The second, longer fragment describes the reigns of Michael I (811–813) and Leo V (813–820). Both provide details not contained in the chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor or its continuation, which also cover that period. The first fragment is contained in a single manuscript preserved in the Vatican Library (Cod. Vat. gr. 2014, 13th c.), where it is placed after two accounts of sieges of Constantinople (626 and 717) and before succinct lives of the empresses Irene and Theodora, and the absolution of Emperor Theophilos (829–842). The second fragment also survives in a sole manuscript, now at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (Cod. Par. gr. 1711, dated 1013). It was published in the Bonn corpus in 1842.<sup>1</sup> The latest research suggests that, contrary to established opinion, the two fragments were from different pens and may be considered separately. To that end, and to facilitate further discussion, we offer an English translation of the 811 fragment—also known as the Dujčev fragment and the *Chronicle of 811*—based on Dujčev’s 1965 edition, with his pagination in square brackets.<sup>2</sup>

*About the Emperor Nikephoros and how he leaves his bones in Bulgaria*

[p. 210] *In the ninth year of the reign of the emperor Nikephoros, the emperor Nikephoros himself invaded Bulgaria, wanting to obliterate it, as he expected. He took with him his son Staurakios and his son-in-law Michael, whose surname was Rangabe, as well as all the patricians and commanders (τοὺς πατρικίους καὶ ἀρχοντας) and dignitaries, all the*

1 “Historia de Leone Bardae Armenii filio,” in *Leo Grammaticus, Eustathius*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB 43 (Bonn, 1842), 335–62, which was based not on an original consultation of the manuscript, but on earlier editions in the Venice Byzantine series (1729) and by Combefis in the Paris Byzantine series (1655). See also, but with care, F. Iadevaia, *Scriptor Incertus: Testo critico, traduzione e note*, 2nd ed. (Messina, 1997), 39–72. A major

new edition by A. Markopoulos is scheduled to appear in the CFHB Berlin series.

2 I. Dujčev, “La chronique byzantine de l’an 811,” *TM* 1 (1965): 205–54, at 210–16. I am grateful to Alice-Mary Talbot, who offered suggestions to improve the translation. In addition to this one, all other translations in this article are mine.

regiments, and also the sons of the commanders (τῶν ἀρχόντων τὰ τέκνα) who were aged fifteen or above, whom he formed into a retinue for his son, and to whom he gave the name “Hikanatoi” (ἱκανάτους). When he had entered the defiles the Bulgars learned of the size of the army he brought with him, and since apparently they were unable to resist, they abandoned everything they had with them and fled into the mountains. Then he [Nikephoros] entered and encamped in the palace of the first man of Bulgaria (τοῦ πρώτου τῆς Βουλγαρίας), named Krum, and finding there an army of hand-picked and armed Bulgars who had remained behind to guard the place, up to twelve thousand in number, he engaged battle with them and killed them all. Next in similar fashion he faced another fifty thousand in battle, and having clashed with them, destroyed them all. Consequently the wretched man’s spirit and heart were engorged with pride [p. 212] because thus far he had achieved this by his own righteous deeds—as he said to those accompanying him, “Behold,” he said, “what righteous accomplishments.” Thus after entering Krum’s palace, searching for his treasuries, and finding great spoils, he began to distribute them among his army per the troop roster, that is copper [coins] and clothes and various other items. When he opened the storehouses of his [Krum’s] wine he distributed it so that everyone could drink his fill. Strolling up the paths of the palace [complex] and walking on the terraces of the houses, he exalted and exclaimed “Behold, God has given me all this, and I want to found here a city that bears my name so that I might be renowned in all succeeding generations.” Having spent several days there, he [Nikephoros] left impious Krum’s palace, and on his departure burned all the buildings and the surrounding wall, which were built of wood. Next, not concerned with a swift departure, he marched through the midst of Bulgaria, wanting to reach Sardika, for he thought that he had destroyed all Bulgaria. After he had spent fifteen days entirely neglecting his affairs, and his wits and judgment had departed him, he was no longer himself, but was completely confused. Seized by the torpor of false pretension, he no longer left his tent nor gave anyone an instruction or order. Some men inveighed against him and sent his son to talk to him about leaving there, but he took no heed at all and instead insulted his son and wanted to hit him. The army, therefore, seizing the opportunity, plundered unsparingly, burning fields that were not harvested. They hamstringed cows and ripped the tendons from their loins as the animals wailed loudly and struggled convulsively. They slaughtered sheep and pigs, and committed impermissible acts. Next, those who observed Nikephoros’s disorder and incoherence, and that nobody dared speak to him, began little by little to desert and make off by ruses.

The Bulgars had constructed a fearsome and impenetrable fence out of large pieces of wood, in the manner of a wall. Therefore, the Bulgars seized their opportunity, observing from the mountains that those [who

had deserted Nikephoros's army] were wandering around. They hired the Avars and neighboring Slavs (Σκλαβηνίας), arming even the women like men, and on the fifteenth day since their [the Byzantines'] invasion, as Saturday dawned on the 23rd of July, they fell upon those [Byzantine soldiers] [p. 214] still half asleep, who arose and, arming themselves in haste, joined battle. But since the regiments were encamped a great distance from one another, they did not realize immediately what was happening. For they [the Bulgars and their allies] fell only upon the imperial encampment, which began to be cut to pieces. When they resisted, only for a short while without effect, many were slaughtered, and the others who saw this gave themselves to flight.

At this same place there was also a river that was very swampy and difficult to cross. When they did not immediately find a ford to cross the river, pursued by the enemy, they [the Byzantines] threw themselves into the river. Entering with their horses and not being able to get out, they sank into the swamp, and were trampled by those coming from behind. And some men fell on the others, so that the river was so full of men and horses that the enemies crossed on top of them unharmed and pursued the rest who—as was reasonable—thought they had come through safely. Here, therefore, all the patricians and other commanders (πάντες οἱ πατρίκιοι καὶ λοιποὶ ἄρχοντες) fell. Those who thought they had escaped from the carnage of the river came up against the fence that the Bulgars had constructed, which was strong and exceedingly difficult to cross. Since they were not able to break through it with their horses, they abandoned their horses and, having climbed up with their own hands and feet, hurled themselves headlong on the other side. But there was a deep excavated trench on the other side, so that those who hurled themselves from the top broke their limbs. Some of them died immediately, while the others progressed a short distance, but did not have the strength to walk, but fell to the ground and died tormented by hunger and thirst. In other places, men set fire to the fence, and when the bonds [that held the logs together] burned through and the fence collapsed above the trench, those fleeing were unexpectedly thrown down and fell into the pit of the trench of fire, both themselves and their horses. This was a worse misfortune than the peril of the river.

Who on hearing these things will not weep? Who will not lament? For the children of the old and new commanders (Τὰ δὲ τέκνα τῶν ἀρχόντων, i.e., the Hikanatoi), who were numerous and in the very flower of youth, with bodies of beautiful paleness and hair and beards of shimmering fairness, and a face with beautiful features, some of whom were recently married to women distinguished by nobility and beauty, they all died there. Some were killed by the sword, some drowned in the river, some hurled headlong from the fence, some burned by the fire in the trench, and of the few who survived, nearly all died after the journey home.

*On that same day the Emperor Nikephoros was killed during the first assault, and nobody is able to relate the manner of his death. Injured [p. 216] also was his son Staurakios, who suffered a mortal wound to the spinal vertebrae from which he died, having ruled the Romans for only two months. Many of the surviving Romans, after the battle ended, were forced by the impious Bulgars, who had then not yet been baptized (οὐπω τότε βαπτισθέντων), to renounce Christ and embrace the error of the Scythian pagans. Those who were preserved by the power of Christ endured every outrage and by various torments earned the martyr's crown.*

*In this way the Emperor Nikephoros, through thoughtlessness and false pretension, killed himself and the whole Roman army, having reigned eight years and seven months. He was a man of above average height, broad with a fat paunch, shaggy hair, prominent lips and a large face with a big graying beard. His body was stout, his thought extremely prudent, clever and astute, especially in affairs of state [or financial affairs]. He was also penurious and miserly to excess. Because of this he was condemned to eternal damnation.*

*And so, brothers, let us remember our departed brothers and fathers, and supplicate our good and just God to protect us from such condemnation, and that we may through careful observance of the divine teachings of Christ attain the blessing promised to the righteous. For he is praised and glorified forever and ever. Amen.*

The discovery and initial publication of the 811 fragment, by Ivan Dujčev in 1936, was followed swiftly by a re-edition and two articles by the prolific Henri Grégoire, who maintained that the text was produced very soon after the events it describes, and that it was used by Theophanes the Confessor in composing his account just a few years later.<sup>3</sup> Grégoire argued further that the account, although later modified for a hagiographical purpose, was originally part of a chronicle: the same chronicle from which the second fragment, by the so-called Scriptor Incertus, had been excerpted. Grégoire's hypothesis was based principally on perceived similarities between the portraits of

3 I. Dujčev, "Novi zhitiini danni za pochodna na Nikifora I v Bulgariya prez 811 god.," *Spisanie na Bulgarskata Akademiya na Naukite* 54 (1936): 147–88; H. Grégoire, "Un nouveau fragment du 'Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio,'" *Byzantion* 11 (1936): 417–27; idem, "Du nouveau sur la chronographie byzantine: Le 'Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio' et le dernier continuateur de Malalas," *BACBelg*, 5th ser., 22, 10–12 (1936): 420–36. See F. Dölger's brief reviews of these and of a third, redundant edition of the frag-

ment by V. Beševliev, in *BZ* 37 (1937): 184–85. The most recent overview of scholarship on the fragment is provided by A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί και Χρονογράφοι, Β' (8ος–10ος αι.)* (Athens, 2002), 189–95. For Theophanes' use, see his *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, CSHB (Leipzig, 1883), 1:490–91, and C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), 672–76.

Nikephoros I and Michael I. This led him to suggest further that both were drawn from a lost continuation of the chronicle of John Malalas, which is replete with such portraits. Grégoire's coup de grâce was the fact that in an Oxford manuscript of Malalas "one finds a remarkable passage on Achilles' Myrmidons, which, the author recounts, could not be other than the Bulgarians. It does not seem that before the ninth century one would have dreamt of identifying the Bulgarians with a people of Thessaly, or if one prefers, of Macedonia."<sup>4</sup>

Grégoire maintained modestly that he did not insist on the identification of Malalas Continuatus, but his attribution of the 811 fragment to the Scriptor Incertus was beyond doubt. The first scholar to subject the text to detailed critical scrutiny agreed with the latter conclusion, but refuted the former. Lidija Tomić maintained that the language employed in the fragments, and the detailed coverage offered, was most uncharacteristic of a chronicle, and that we should recognize instead an original work of history that had been neglected by later authors with access to Theophanes and George the Monk. She argued further that the work was composed after 864, since there is an allusion to the conversion of the Bulgars in the first fragment (οὐπω τότε βαπτισθέντων, "then not yet baptized"). Her suggestions met with the approval of her mentor, George Ostrogorsky, who added a footnote to that effect to the third edition of his magisterial survey.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Browning also found the case that this was a contemporary work of history to be convincing, and confirmed that the two fragments were indeed from the same pen. In a 1965 article, in a volume of *Byzantion* dedicated to the memory of Grégoire, he pointed out additional similarities between the two fragments. Most notable in his opinion was that in both Khan Krum is referred to, quite unusually and pejoratively, as ὁ πρῶτος τῆς Βουλγαρίας, "first man of Bulgaria," rather than the more familiar ὁ ἀρχων. *Protos*, Browning suggested, is generally used to refer to leaders of small dependent communities or cities, not rulers of peoples.<sup>6</sup> We shall return to this suggestion below, for it has not been addressed in recent studies of the texts.

Browning's 1965 article demonstrated that passages from the second fragment attributed to the Scriptor Incertus were copied verbatim or in paraphrase into the chronicle attributed to pseudo-Symeon

<sup>4</sup> "Chronographie byzantine," 435–36.

<sup>5</sup> L. Tomić, "Fragmenti jednog istoriskog spisa IX veka," *ZRVI* 1 (1952): 78–85; G. Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1963), 123–24; *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd English ed. (Oxford, 1968), 148.

<sup>6</sup> "Notes on the 'Scriptor Incertus de

Leone Armenio," *Byzantion* 35 (1965):

389–411, at 402: "[This] fact is one of the strongest arguments for its derivation from the same source as the Scriptor incertus." Browning's article offers essential corrections to the Bonn edition of the second fragment, which have been incorporated into Iadevaia's edition.

Magistros, which has been preserved in one Parisian manuscript (BN Cod. Par. gr. 1712, 12th–13th c.). However, such borrowings from the Scriptor Incertus as exist in pseudo-Symeon, Browning convincingly demonstrated, relate only to the period after the accession of Michael I Rangabe. That is, the unpublished portion of pseudo-Symeon's text dealing with the period 714–811, which is drawn from accounts by Theophanes and George the Monk, contains no obvious borrowings from the 811 fragment, nor from additional lost portions of the posited chronicle. This led Browning to conclude that the Scriptor Incertus was a contemporary history of the reigns of Nikephoros I, Michael I, and Leo V (i.e., 802–20), and not part of a longer chronicle. Hence, according to Browning, in its finished form, the full text (containing both fragments and perhaps not much more) must have been completed after, probably shortly after, 820. He dismissed the phrase οὕτω τότε βαπτισθέντων as a later interpolation.<sup>7</sup>

Unaware of Browning's conclusions, in the same year, 1965, Dujčev presented a major new edition and analysis of the first fragment, which he called *The Chronicle of 811*, with full commentary and French translation adapted from that offered by Grégoire.<sup>8</sup> Dujčev suggested that further study was needed to prove or disprove an association of the two fragments, let alone their derivation from a longer chronicle. He observed that the portraits to which Grégoire drew attention are not unique to Malalas, nor are they uncommon in later authors.<sup>9</sup> In conclusion, following a full and rich commentary, Dujčev reiterated aspects of his 1936 position, that the text was hagiographical in character—even if this was the result of later modification of a historical text—and deserved to be treated as such. He proposed two possible contexts for the modification: either in the period after the conversion of the Bulgarians, which would allow for the inclusion of the phrase οὕτω τότε βαπτισθέντων; or earlier, if one accepts that the phrase could have been added by a copyist as late as the thirteenth century, when the sole extant manuscript was produced. More problematic is his position that the text in its current form was produced to commemorate as martyrs “all the victims—with the exception of Nikephoros and probably some of those closest to him—who fell during the war of 811 or immediately afterwards.”<sup>10</sup> We shall return to this below.

Despite Dujčev's restatement of his case, much of which Grégoire had sought to modify, his observation that “Grégoire's positions were

7 On pseudo-Symeon see A. Markopoulos, *Η Χρονογραφία τοῦ Ψευδοσυμεῶν καὶ οἱ πηγές της* (Ioannina, 1978).

8 Dujčev, “Chronique byzantine” (n. 2 above).

9 Ibid., 208 and 249 n. 181, which lists

later authors, including Skylitzes and Theophanes Continuatus.

10 Ibid., 252–54.

generally received favorably” remained true thereafter, and the two fragments were treated together as parts of a historical work in major works of reference until the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> In 1987, Francesca Iadevaia produced a critical edition of both fragments accompanied by an Italian translation and commentary. This, and a second edition produced in 1997, included a historiographical introduction by Emilio Pinto, who concluded, with some élan, that the Scriptor Incertus in fact wrote a continuation of the lost chronicle of Traianos, otherwise known as the *Epitome*, covering the period 711–948. Unfortunately, this conjecture is unsupported, and the documentation provided is unreliable. Most egregiously, Browning is alleged to have demonstrated use of the 811 fragment by pseudo-Symeon, which he definitely did not. And neither Iadevaia nor Pinto appears to have been aware of Dujčev’s important 1965 article and edition of the 811 fragment.<sup>12</sup> Nor did they register important new information in papers published by Cyril Mango in 1977 and 1983.

The first of Mango’s articles identified Sergios the Confessor, known only as author of a lost work of ninth-century history, as the father of the patriarch Photios. Photios, in his *Bibliotheca*, had described Sergios’s history in the following terms: “He starts with the actions of Michael [II], then reverts to the lawless abominations of [Constantine V] Kopronymos, and goes on from that point in a continuous narrative until the eighth year of the same Michael.” The work is praised for its clarity, and for the fact that the “language blooms with a natural grace and does not contain any elaborate forms. This kind of style is especially appropriate for ecclesiastical history, which was indeed the author’s intention.”<sup>13</sup> The relevance of this will become apparent shortly. Mango’s second paper addressed our two fragments more directly, demonstrating that both were used in the composition of a saint’s life by a certain Sabas.<sup>14</sup> Sabas was, in Mango’s estimation, the second man to write a *Life of St. Ioannikios* (d. 847), which he did

11 G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1958), 1:503–4; H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1978), 1:333–34; J. Karyannopoulos and G. Weiss, *Quellenkunde zur Geschichte von Byzanz (324–1453)* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 1:342.

12 Iadevaia, *Scriptor Incertus*, 9–19, cited above (at n. 1) in the second edition of 1997. I thank Athanasios Markopoulos for providing me with a copy of this. See Browning, “Notes,” 408: “For the reign of Nicephorus Pseudo-Symeon offers only an excerpt from George the Monk followed by an excerpt from Theophanes, slightly paraphrased.”

13 C. Mango, “The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios,” in *Iconoclasm*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977), 133–40; repr. in C. Mango, *Byzantium and Its Image* (London, 1984), XIII, 1–16.

14 C. Mango, “The Two Lives of St. Ioannikios and the Bulgarians,” in *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students = Harvard Ukrainian Studies 7* (1983): 393–404.

in order to eliminate evidence for Ioannikios's desertion from the army following the battle of Markellai (792), and of hostility to the Studites present in an earlier life by a certain Peter.<sup>15</sup> Mango was therefore inclined to date Sabas's composition to the patriarchate of Ignatios (847–858), and supported arguments presented by Vitalien Laurent, who offered the range 847–60, preferring circa 855. Laurent's preferred date was apparently confirmed by the discovery of a revised *Life of St. Peter of Atroa* by Sabas, which postdated his *Life of St. Ioannikios* and was supposed to have been written circa 858–65.<sup>16</sup> Sabas's work differs markedly from Peter's, and it is in the discrepancies that Mango has identified Sabas's use of contemporary historical sources. Peter's life provides only one explicit date, that of Ioannikios's death in 847, whereas "Sabas has gone to some trouble to pile up chronological indications," including references to regnal years. He provides dates for the battles of Pliska in 811 and Versinikia in 813, and more importantly in his accounts of them reproduces information and vocabulary preserved in the two fragments attributed to the Scriptor Incertus, but not transmitted by Theophanes the Confessor.<sup>17</sup> Sabas provides, furthermore, details pertaining to the battle of Markellai in 792, which he misdates to 796, the year of a second, less dramatic encounter at that place. Mango concludes, therefore, that Sabas had access to a chronicle that detailed, among much else, the encounters between Byzantines and Bulgarians in 792/96, 811, and 813. By Mango's reasoning, which is utterly plausible:

1. The Dujčev fragment and the Scriptor Incertus are indeed parts of the same work.

2. This historical work was in circulation by the 850s.

3. It extended at least as far back as 792 if it contained an account of both encounters at Markellai.

By extension, the phrase οὕτω τότε βαπτισθέντων contained in the Dujčev fragment was certainly a later interpolation, marking its excision from the chronicle and reuse in a liturgical context.

Warren Treadgold found this convincing, so far as it goes, and sought to identify the author of Mango's chronicle. Conflating the

<sup>15</sup> A. Kazhdan with L. Sherry and C. Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 327–40, questions Mango's findings, but the suggestion that Peter and Sabas may have been writing contemporaneously and independently ("a doubler") would allow for an even earlier dating of Sabas's text. See now D. Sullivan, "Life of St. Ioannikios," in *Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington, DC, 1998),

243–351, for a translation of the life by Peter with an insightful introduction.

<sup>16</sup> V. Laurent, *La vie merveilleuse de Saint Pierre d'Atroa (†837)* (Brussels, 1956), 15–16, and *La vita retractata et les miracles posthumes de Saint Pierre d'Atroa* (Brussels, 1957), 29–30. Sabas had also written the first life, shortly after Peter's death in 837.

<sup>17</sup> Mango, "Two Lives," 398–400.



information from both of Mango's articles, he devised the following hypothesis: Sergios the Confessor was the Scriptor Incertus, and he wrote a chronicle that included both fragments, stretching back to 753 and forward at least to 825.<sup>18</sup> As Treadgold noted, Mango did not make this connection, and for a good reason: the text in question is described by Photios, not as a lengthy chronicle, but as an account of the reign of Michael II with a retrospective excursus on the abominations of the iconoclast Constantine V. If Mango is correct in identifying Sergios as Photios's father, one must imagine that Photios would have fully and accurately described his father's work.<sup>19</sup> It may have been easier to argue that Sergios conceived of his polemic as a continuation of the critical accounts of the reigns of Michael I and Leo V provided by the Scriptor Incertus. In any event, Treadgold's suggestions that Sergios was the Scriptor Incertus, and that his work "marks a perceptible maturing of Byzantine historiography," have been dismissed by Ihor Ševčenko.<sup>20</sup> While Ševčenko accepted that both fragments likely were derived from a single work, he raised the compelling possibility that they were not, but were instead discrete tracts, "polemical pamphlets in both high and low style [that] dealt with contemporary history," among which the lost work of Sergios the Confessor may be counted. Several such tracts were available to, and used by, Theophanes the Confessor. As Ševčenko further noted, "two other pieces (in fact part of the same whole) have come down to us—I have in mind the *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio* and the story, discovered by Ivan Dujčev half a century ago...."<sup>21</sup> An account of Nikephoros I's death in Bulgaria may have been either a free-standing polemic, or indeed a retrospective excursus in a longer account—like that on Constantine V in the lost tract by Sergios the Confessor—juxtaposed with an account of subsequent imperial dealings with the Bulgars.

In 1999, Athanasios Markopoulos, who is producing a new definitive edition of the Scriptor Incertus for the Berlin series of the *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, argued, on stylistic grounds, that "the two fragments were composed in two entirely distinct milieux and

18 *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), 376–78. The date 753 is the first regnal year provided in Sabas's *Life of St. Ioannikios*. In fact, although he was unaware of it, Treadgold was repeating a possibility raised by Markopoulos, *Χρονολογία*, 155–57 (n. 7 above).

19 Mango, "Liquidation of Iconoclasm," 6–9. Mango suggests further that writing this history may have led to the exile of Sergios and his family by Michael II's son, Theophilos, which would be one more reason

for Photios's description to be accurate. Kazhdan, *History*, 211, sees no reason to identify Sergios as Photios's father, but still is skeptical of identifying him as the Scriptor Incertus.

20 "The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800," *DOP* 46 (1992): 279–93, at 280 n. 3: "[This attribution] assumes an embarrassingly low level of literary sophistication for the father of Patriarch Photios; and the stylistic judgment in codex 67 of Photios' *Bibliotheca*—our only source

for Sergios—does not bear out such an assumption."

21 *Ibid.*, 288–89. For suggestions about tracts used by Theophanes for the period 780–802, see P. Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI: Die Legitimation einer fremden und der Versuch einer eigenen Herrschaft* (Munich, 1978), 1:389–97, 2:815–16, although Ševčenko suggests this exaggerates their number. See now also Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, lxxiv–xcv, at xci (n. 3 above).

for different reasons.”<sup>22</sup> The first fragment was not, he observed, taken from a work of history, but rather a hagiographical text produced for a liturgical purpose after 864/65, which *terminus post quem* is provided by the phrase οὕτω τότε βαπτισθέντων in the concluding section of the fragment.<sup>23</sup> Markopoulos highlighted the hagiographical elements in the text and asserted that there is no reason to suppose that the text and its conclusion were composed at different times.<sup>24</sup> The hagiographical account, he maintained, drew on a dossier of information likely compiled from eyewitness accounts by survivors of the tragedy shortly after 811, but which had not been worked into a history or chronicle. Thus, to some extent, Markopoulos has revived Dujčev’s original interpretation, but gone further still. He has suggested that the focus on Nikephoros’s spiritual flaws, and upon divine retribution for his pride, are tonally “rather Old Testament.” But such a focus is hardly the preserve of hagiography, since Byzantine historical texts are replete with such explanations for disasters, whether they be military defeats or natural phenomena. Thus Theophanes the Confessor’s account of the disaster of 811 is no less hagiographical, and Romilly Jenkins, rather cynically, considered the tone of the 811 fragment to be “one more out of a hundred examples of the dependence of the whole Byzantine military machine on the wariness and sobriety of its commander-in-chief.”<sup>25</sup>

Although Markopoulos does not say so explicitly, his essay suggests that it is as inappropriate to call the first fragment the *Chronicle of 811* as it is to attribute it to the Scriptor Incertus, but we retain that nomenclature for the sake of clarity. The second fragment, in Markopoulos’s estimation, was produced, on internal evidence, shortly after 820 by an iconodule author hostile to the iconoclast emperors Michael I and Leo V. It is a historical work, but is unlikely to have been excerpted from a much longer work, either by Malalas or Sergios the Confessor. Markopoulos reiterated a familiar point, that imperial portraits of a remarkably consistent style can be found in several works of history besides Malalas, for example those by Symeon Logothete, pseudo-Symeon, Leo the Deacon, George Akropolites, and the largely lost *Epitome* of the *patrikios* Traianos. He further made an important original observation, which eluded Browning: the absence of any trace of the *Chronicle of 811* in pseudo-Symeon, which makes such free use of

22 “La chronique de l’an 811 et le *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio*: Problèmes des relations entre l’hagiographie et l’histoire,” *REB* 57 (1999): 255–62, at 259.

23 Thus preferring Tomić, “Fragmenti,” 81 (n. 5 above), over Browning, “Notes,” 406

(n. 6 above), and others.

24 “Chronique de l’an 811,” 259.

25 *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, AD 610–1071* (London, 1966), 126.

the Scriptor Incertus fragment, suggests that the two texts existed quite independently in the later tenth century, when pseudo-Symeon's text was completed.

Markopoulos's final and most challenging task was to address Mango's hypothesis that Sabas, the author of the second *Life of Ioannikios*, had access to a single source for the battles of Pliska and Versinikia, when he reproduced information provided only in the two fragments under scrutiny. Markopoulos was correct to observe that we need not assume with Mango that Sabas had access to a single historical source for the events of 811 and 813, although this does appear to be more likely. More problematic is that the composition of *Chronicle of 811* must predate the composition of Sabas's life. It is surely not sufficient to suggest that Sabas had access to the same dossier of eyewitness testimonies as the author of the *Chronicle of 811*, unless one is willing to go the step further and argue that Sabas was the author of both texts. Markopoulos did not take that step. Instead, he observed that, since the date of the life's composition is unknown, it is not impossible that Sabas was writing in the 860s, and had access to a version of the *Chronicle of 811* and to the Scriptor Incertus. However, to make this claim Markopoulos was obliged to ignore the internal evidence presented by Mango that the life was likely produced during the patriarchate of Ignatios (847–858). In Mango's words, Sabas's *Life of Ioannikios* confirms "the supposition that the reference to the baptism of the Bulgarians in the Dujčev fragment is a later gloss." In failing effectively to counter this thesis, Markopoulos ended his essay in a rather unsatisfactory fashion, and the evidence of Sabas's *Life of Ioannikios* may well undermine his broader thesis.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Markopoulos's principal conclusion, that we must disassociate the two fragments, was independently corroborated in a brief study published shortly before by Alexander Kazhdan and Lee Sherry.<sup>27</sup> Going further than Markopoulos, who refused to suggest a date other than post-864/65, Kazhdan and Sherry dated the fragment to the later ninth century, and further suggested a comparison with the *Martyrion of the Twenty Sabaites*.<sup>28</sup> We shall return to this below. Neither of the articles by Markopoulos and Kazhdan and Sherry addressed Browning's point, that the use of the title ὁ πρῶτος

<sup>26</sup> J. Haldon and L. Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources* (Aldershot, 2001), 179–80, accept Markopoulos's interpretation, although it is not true to say that he "argued that the 'Chronicle of 811' was in fact composed, rather than merely rewritten, in the later 860s...." Markopoulos refused to commit to

a date of composition, and offered only a terminus post quem of 864.

<sup>27</sup> A. Kazhdan and L. Sherry, "Some Notes on the Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio," *BSI* 58 (1997): 110–12; Kazhdan, *History*, 208–11 (n. 15 above).

<sup>28</sup> Kazhdan, *History*, 169–81.

[τῆς] Βουλγαρίας in both fragments is pejorative, unique, and therefore “one of the strongest arguments for [their] derivation from the same source.” This issue deserves further comment. Dujčev also noted the use of *protos* to refer to Krum, and observed that “of all the titles used in Byzantium to designate sovereigns or foreign leaders, this was the least honorific.” He made no claim that this proves a link with the second fragment attributed to the Scriptor Incertus, but noted that *protos* is used in “other historical sources of the time, Byzantine and Bulgarian.” The Byzantine sources he cited are the second fragment attributed to the Scriptor Incertus, and the passage of pseudo-Symeon derived from it.<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting, moreover, that the second fragment reads ὁ Πρωτοβουλγαρίας ὁ Κρούμος, for which the editor, Bekker, tentatively suggested an emendation to ὁ πρῶτος Βουλγαρίας.<sup>30</sup> Dujčev only alluded to the *Life of St. Blasios of Amorion*, of which Grégoire had made inventive use, and which appears to offer a fuller version of the Bulgar ruler’s title: ὁ πρῶτος ἐκ Θεοῦ ἄρχων, “by grace of God first archon.”<sup>31</sup> This source is not strictly “of the time,” but refers to Boris, who accepted Christianity from the Byzantines in 864/65. However, Grégoire found confirmation of his supposition in an inscription, to which Dujčev referred (albeit erroneously) in a footnote.

Dujčev’s citation of other Bulgarian “historical sources of the time” amounted to a single inscription, from Hambarli (modern Malamirovo), which has been published on several occasions.<sup>32</sup> This inscription, in the mangled Greek typical of early Bulgarian monuments, does indeed use the word *protos* (for *prōtos*), but it is not applied to the ruler of Bulgaria. Rather it is used of a subordinate: Ἀπο Βερόην κὲ [...] ἐστὴν *protos* ὁ Τοῦκος ὁ ἡ[ζ]ουργοῦ βουλῆα δ[η]ὰ τὸ δεξιὸν μέ[ρος κ]ὲ ὁ Βαρδάνης κὲ ὁ Ηανῆς ὑ στρατηγὸν ὑπ[ο]κάτου αὐτοῦ, “Of Berroia and...is the first Toukos the *ichirgu boilas* on the right flank and Bardanes and John the generals are under him.” In this context the exact meaning of *protos* is unclear: Grégoire maintained that it refers to Toukos’s rank, relative to his named subordinates Bardanes and John.<sup>33</sup> Beševliev cited Sophocles’ dictionary definition as “primus, the chief of a place,” implying Toukos held the position of

29 Dujčev, “Chronique byzantine,” 224 (n. 2 above).

30 “Historia de Leone Bardae Armenii filio,” in *Leo Grammaticus, Eustathius*, 348 (n. 1 above).

31 H. Grégoire, “La vie de Saint Blaise d’Amorium,” *Byzantion* 5 (1929): 391–414, at 407.

32 K. and H. Škorpil, “Antike Inschriften aus Bulgarien,” *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Oesterreich-Ungarn* 15

(1892): 91–110, at 98–99; K. Škorpil and P. Nikov, “Nadpisi ot p’rvoto B’lgarsko tsarstvo v iztochnata chast na Balkanskiya polyostrov,” *BSI* 3 (1931): 333–82, at 354–67; V. Beševliev, *Die protobulgarischen Inschriften* (Berlin, 1963), 220–29, no. 47, originally published in Bulgarian in 1934; H. Grégoire, “Les sources épigraphiques de l’histoire bulgare,” *Byzantion* 9 (1934): 745–86, at 756–73.

33 Grégoire, “Sources épigraphiques,” 758. Grégoire proceeded to suggest that in

Toukos we can identify one Tzokos or Doukoumos, who became ruler of Bulgaria between Krum and Omurtag. He did not, however, link this with the use of *protos*.

chief of Berroia and other listed cities.<sup>34</sup> This latter definition would correlate with Browning's observation, distinguishing between *protos* and *archon*. But no definitive solution can be offered based on this ambiguous evidence.

In any event, Dujčev's reference is incorrect, for this is not the text that Grégoire used to suggest an association between *protos* and *archon*. Instead, Grégoire had focused on the other side of the same inscribed stone, where is recorded at his lines 32–34 (Beševliev's lines 33–35), the following: ὁ ἄρχων <ὁ α> ὁ Κρούμος ὁ γέρος, "the *archon* [the *protos*] old Krum."<sup>35</sup> Here Grégoire had filled a lacuna in the inscription with his preferred reading, being the letter alpha, the favored Byzantine Greek abbreviation for *protos*, which is used frequently for example in sigillographic inscriptions. Although it was accepted by Beševliev, this reconstruction must remain conjecture.<sup>36</sup> The title ὁ ἄρχων ἐκ Θεοῦ, without πρῶτος, features in at least three further ninth-century Bulgarian inscriptions, although all postdate Krum. In inscriptions erected for Omurtag (814–831) and Malamir (831–836) this epithet follows the title Κανασυβηγῆ (Κανασυβιγῆ), for which it may be a literal Greek translation. In two instances, its use at the head of an inscription appears to signify its status as an official title claimed by the Bulgarian ruler, which fact is confirmed by its appearance on a gold medallion struck by Omurtag, on which he is depicted in Byzantine imperial style.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, we may conclude that the use of *protos* to signify the ruler of Bulgaria is extremely rare in Byzantine texts, and rarer still in Bulgarian inscriptions, if it appears at all with that meaning. Its use in both fragments under scrutiny appears, therefore, to be notable. But is it significant enough to warrant Browning's suggestion that this is "one of the strongest arguments" that the two formed part of the same lost work? This rests on the assumption that the term was used not casually, but deliberately to diminish Krum. This need not be the case, since in both instances *protos* is used of Krum because the familiar title for the Bulgarian ruler, *archon*, had just been used with an alternative meaning, to describe Byzantine commanders or officials. The

34 Beševliev, *Protobulgarischen Inschriften*, 223. Beševliev also noted that Toukos "strongly recalls the name Tzokos and Tzokos," although one cannot make the association with certainty. He provided clarification of the title *ichirgu boilas*.

35 Grégoire, "Sources épigraphiques," 753; Beševliev, *Protobulgarischen Inschriften*, 125, 135.

36 H. Grégoire, "L'empereur Nicéphore le Chauve et Kroum 'premier' de Bulgarie,"

*BACBelg*, 5th ser., 20 (1936): 261–72, at 272, was well aware that his suggestion rested on shaky foundations: "I would stop myself here, not wishing to offer my colleagues conjectures, but only certainties, without trying to extract from the final lines their secret, if I did not have the chance to read there a title of Krum which was perhaps his official and principal title."

37 Beševliev, *Protobulgarischen Inschriften*, 149, no. 6; 277, no. 57; and 247, no. 55, which

has the title *archon* later in the text, but again describing the ruler; see also 296, no. 67. See now T. Stepanov, "The Bulgar title ΚΑΝΑΣΥΒΗΓΗ: reconstructing the notions of divine kingship in Bulgaria, AD 822–36," *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001): 1–19, for the suggestion that the titles Κανασυβηγῆ and ὁ ἄρχων ἐκ Θεοῦ are equivalents; references to the medallions; and a discussion of theories concerning Bulgarian titles.

author of the 811 fragment had just used the term *archon* twice to refer to the mustering by Nikephoros of Byzantine commanders and their sons (τοὺς πατρικίους καὶ ἄρχοντας...καὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων τὰ τέκνα), while in the second fragment, addressing the actions of Leo the Armenian, we are told that God sets at naught the plans of commanders (ἀθετῶν βουλὰς ἀρχόντων).<sup>38</sup> On neither occasion would an author wish the Bulgarian ruler to be confused with the Byzantine emperor's subordinates. So it seems most likely that on both occasions the use of *protos* was simply a means to distinguish the Bulgarian ruler from Byzantine officials. One might, of course, see this as even stronger evidence for a single hand at work, but equally one might expect any author to wish to make such a distinction. Moreover, it is notable that the author of the first fragment uses *patrikioi* and *archontes* together, employing the same article for both on two separate occasions, whereas the author of the second fragment makes no mention of *patrikioi*, juxtaposing his *archontes* with *laoi*, "common folk." As with so much surrounding these intriguing fragments, therefore, it remains a matter of conjecture whether the use of *protos*, and indeed its juxtaposition with *archon*, in both reflects the work of one or two authors. At least, however, we can regard Grégoire's suggestion, that *protos* was part of Krum's official title, as highly doubtful.

Where then do we stand in our effort to establish a context for the composition of the so-called *Chronicle of 811*, and its relationship to the Scriptor Incertus? Many solutions remain possible: indeed very little can definitively be ruled out. Of these possibilities, we offer the following provisional conclusions:

(1) Following Markopoulos, Kazhdan, and Sherry, one must conclude that no definitive association of the two fragments can be made on stylistic grounds. Grégoire's arguments have been substantially undermined. And several of the links highlighted by Browning and Dujčev, notably the title given to the Bulgarian ruler in both fragments, have been shown to be inconclusive.

(2) The information provided in both fragments may have been recorded in the first instance in a dossier of eyewitness testimonials, which were perhaps used by polemicists composing tracts in the first quarter of the ninth century. The 811 fragment possibly found its first formulation in this environment, although Markopoulos would argue that this was in a hagiographical rather than a polemical context.

(3) However, if one follows Mango's reasoning, it is likely that a chronicle or other coherent work of history was also produced, which covered the period in question (at least from 792 to 813), which used information also presented in the fragments, and which was in circulation in the 850s.

38 Dujčev, "Chronique byzantine," 210 (n. 2 above); "Historia de Leone Bardae Armenii filio," in *Leo Grammaticus, Eustathius*, 348; Iadevaia, *Scriptor Incertus*, 27, 57 (both n. 1 above).

(4) All attempts to identify this chronicle or its author have failed: it has not been definitively identified as Malalas Continuatus, nor as a continuation of the *Epitome* of Traianos, nor as a work by Sergios the Confessor. It may, therefore, have been a more limited work, as Browning supposed, covering little more than the period available to us.

(5) If one continues to follow Browning, the absence of any borrowings in the unpublished portion of pseudo-Symeon from either the 811 fragment or a lost source (i.e., a lost portion of the Scriptor Incertus) suggests that no extended chronicle was available to that author in the second half of the tenth century. However, the second fragment attributed to the Scriptor Incertus was certainly used, and his words appear frequently in the published portion of pseudo-Symeon. Thus, one might conclude that by the later tenth century, the two sources of information, if they had ever been associated, had been separated.

(6) One might then return to the issue of the alleged modification of the 811 fragment, and the notorious phrase οὐπω τότε βαπτισθέντων. If one posits a separation of information previously contained in one place, then this must have taken place between 864/65 and the composition of pseudo-Symeon's chronicle, which ends in 962.

The remainder of this article attempts to establish a possible context in which the 811 fragment obtained its current form.

We have concluded provisionally that, *pace* Markopoulos, there is reason to believe that the 811 fragment was composed before the 850s, and modified after 864/65 but before circa 962. Indications within the text betray this modification, and suggest reasons for it. They relate to martyrdom, and a distinction that is drawn between those who died in battle and those who died in captivity. Dujčev understood this distinction, but failed to tease out the necessary connections, obscuring further discussion with his assertion that the fragment commemorated as martyrs “all the victims—with the exception of Nikephoros and probably some of those closest to him—who fell during the war of 811 or immediately afterwards.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, the conclusion to the fragment commemorates quite specifically only those who were taken prisoner and refused to abjure Christ: “Many of the surviving Romans, after the battle ended, were forced by the impious Bulgars, who had then not yet been baptized, to renounce Christ and embrace the error of the Scythian pagans. Those who were preserved by the power of Christ endured every outrage and by various torments earned the martyr's crown.” Here is the most striking disparity between the information provided in the body of the text and its conclusion, and therefore proof that the two were not written together.

39 “Chronique byzantine,” 252–54.

The *Chronicle of 811* informs us at length of the various manners in which the Byzantine soldiers died: being cut to pieces in their encampment by Avar and Slav mercenaries; trampled into the boggy earth by comrades and their horses, or drowned, as they fled; being burned by flaming logs, having hurled themselves from a high fence into a deep trench; and the few getting through dying from hunger and thirst. As if this were not clear enough, the author reiterates, referring specifically to the Hikanatoi: “Some were killed by the sword, some drowned in the river, some hurled headlong from the fence, some burned by the fire in the trench, and of the few who survived, nearly all died after the journey home.” There is no mention whatever of prisoners being taken, who might later die in captivity. We are not suggesting that this was not the case, for it likely was. However, this is not described by the author, whose conclusion therefore is utterly incongruous. So we must conclude that it is not merely the phrase οὐπω τότε βαπτισθέντων that was interpolated, but the passage in which it is placed.

Why would a later author seek to distinguish between those who died in the course of a battle, and those taken prisoner and later killed? The answer eluded Dujčev because he insisted that the Byzantine campaign was “a true holy war [guerre sainte] of the Christian empire against the pagan Bulgars.” It was not. In the ninth century, as Gilbert Dagron has demonstrated, “Byzantium was neither ready for holy war [guerre sainte], nor organized for permanent warfare.”<sup>40</sup> A defining characteristic of Christian “holy war” was the offer of spiritual rewards to those who died in battle. The Orthodox Church refused to countenance this notion, and balked particularly at the notion of martyrdom on the field of battle. If one was captured, however, death at the hands of an infidel while being tortured was manifestly a different matter. Indeed, a copious and fabulous literature detailing the tortures inflicted on Christian martyrs by infidels emerged in the later ninth century, where the infidels were almost invariably Arabs (although iconoclasts also tortured their fair share).<sup>41</sup> The *Martyrion of the Twenty Sabaites*, to which Kazhdan and Sherry drew attention, was an early contribution to this corpus, composed around the year 800.<sup>42</sup> It commemorates the martyrdom in 797 (or 788, as Kazhdan suggested) of twenty monks from the Lavra of St. Sabas in the Judean Desert by Arab raiders, who subjected them to a variety of tortures—including beating with cudgels, swords, and stones—before burning them to death. We have not

40 “Byzance et le modèle islamique au Xe siècle, à propos des *Constitutions tactiques* de l’empereur Léon VI,” *CRAI* (Paris, 1983): 219–43, at 224.

41 Haldon and Brubaker, *Iconoclast Era*, 218–21 (n. 26 above), provides a useful list.

42 Kazhdan, *History*, 169–81 (n. 15 above); ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik* 19.3 [57] (1907): 1–41.



conducted an extensive study of the text, which is far longer than the 811 fragment, but a cursory reading suggests that similarities between the two are superficial. Notably, biblical and patristic quotations, which one would expect in any hagiographical work, are employed extensively in the *Martyrion of the Twenty Sabaïtes*, where they “slow down the stream of narration.” There is no such slowing down in the *Chronicle of 811*, which absence supports the notion that it was neither produced as a *martyrion*, nor extensively reworked if and when it came to serve that purpose. The most one can say is that the person who modified the 811 fragment was familiar with the *Martyrion of the Twenty Sabaïtes* or similar texts produced after circa 850. This may have led him to highlight the fact that the Bulgars, while not Arabs, were at the time not yet baptized.

Unresolved tensions between the story told in the *Chronicle of 811* and its conclusion were evident to the compilers of later liturgical calendars. If we turn to the tenth-century *Typikon* of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, we find the event commemorated thus: “26th of the month [July].... On the same day occurred, due to the carelessness and conceit of the emperor Nikephoros, his own death and the fall of many others.”<sup>43</sup> Battle is not mentioned, perhaps deliberately to maintain ambiguity. However, this entry was greatly expanded and “clarified” in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, which refers to the martyrs of 811, who were celebrated on either 23 or 26 July. The latter date is correct, since the battle took place on a Saturday. The entry for 26 July clearly summarizes the story presented in the 811 fragment, using remarkably similar vocabulary. However, it also elaborates, providing a story of survivors fleeing through densely wooded country, being taken alive, and subjected to countless tortures until, for refusing to abjure Christ, they are killed in several ways, including by beheading, strangulation, and wounding by missiles. “In this way they were wreathed with the crown of the martyr (τὸν τοῦ μαρτυρίου στέφανον ἀναδησάμενοι).”<sup>44</sup>

As John Wortley has noted, the commemoration in the *Synaxarion* presents problems, besides its apparent invention of historical details: the martyrs are said not to have died on the day of the battle, but some time later in captivity. Therefore, their commemoration on either date in July was erroneous, that is, contrary to standard practice.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, one might presume that any prisoners of war taken in 811 would have

43 *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms. Sainte-Croix n. 40, Xe siècle*, vol. 1, *Le cycle des douze mois*, ed. & French trans. J. Mateos (Rome, 1962), 350–51. See also J. Wortley, “Legends of the Byzantine Disaster of 811,” *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 533–62, at 545–46, n. 24.

44 H. Delehaye, ed., *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e Codice Sirmondiano* (Brussels, 1902), 850–51.

45 Wortley, “Legends,” 543.

been kept with those captured at Versinikia in 813, and perhaps also with the displaced population of Adrianople, which was settled north of the Danube in a colony called “Macedonia.”<sup>46</sup> Later legend numbered among these the future emperor Basil I, founder of the Macedonian dynasty. When, in 815, Krum’s successor Omurtag ordered the death of all Christians under his dominion who refused to abjure Christ, 380 preferred martyrdom to apostasy. It is in this episode that we would identify the origins of the story of the captivity and martyrdom of the survivors of 811. Furthermore, a service was composed to commemorate the martyrs of 815, which was to be conducted on 23 January.<sup>47</sup> This date is exactly six months before 23 July, the erroneous date of the battle given in the *Chronicle of 811*, which date was transferred to the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* as one of two upon which the “martyrs” of 811 were to be commemorated.

Might it be the case that the dead of 811 were being commemorated in error as martyrs for having fallen in battle against the “unbaptized” Bulgarians? Might we then surmise that the *Chronicle of 811* was unclear in this regard, and the concluding paragraph added to correct a “misinterpretation” of Orthodox doctrine, thus attributing all martyrdoms to torture in captivity? This correction took place prior to its further elaboration in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, which provides a good clue for dating. If the fragment in its current form had been written after the entry in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, one would expect it to rehearse the details of the martyrs’ deaths—by beheading, strangulation, and so on—which it does not. These details would have balanced the full and graphic accounts of deaths in battle, so their absence suggests that the modification of the fragment must predate the compilation of the *Synaxarion*, or is roughly contemporary with it.

Synaxaria are extremely hard to date precisely, but the initial text of the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* has been placed, by Ševčenko, during the restoration of Constantine VII (945–959), for reasons independent of the episode in question, while the “standard edition reflects a somewhat later form of this collection of notices on saints.”<sup>48</sup> “Somewhat

46 Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 202–3, 214–15 (n. 18 above).

47 E. Follieri and I. Dujčev, “Un’ acolutia inedita per i martiri di Bulgaria dell’ anno 813,” *Byzantion* 33 (1963): 71–106.

48 “Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus,” in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), 167–85, at 188. This dating is supported in a detailed study by A. Luzzi, “Precisazioni sull’epoca di formazione del

Sinassario di Costantinopoli,” *RSBN* 36 (1999): 75–91. The martyrs of 811 are certainly mentioned in a synaxarion thought to be a copy of that written for Basil II (976–1025). The text is preserved not in his famous illuminated *Menologion* (actually a synaxarion, produced ca. 1000, which covers only six months, September to February) but in a document believed to be derived from the second part, which is copied into a Grottaferrata manuscript.

later” may place us in the 960s, when the issue of martyrdom in battle was a live issue, and the need for clarification urgent. This has already been observed by Wortley, in his excellent study of the Byzantine legends adhering to the events of 811, but it bears further elaboration.<sup>49</sup>

As is well known, at one point in his reign (963–969), Nikephoros II Phokas demanded a review of Orthodox canons relating to death in battle, so that “those who fell in battle be honored equally with the holy martyrs and be celebrated with hymns and feast days.”<sup>50</sup> A ruling of the fourth-century church father Basil of Caesarea, that those whose hands were stained with the blood of battle be denied communion, was used by the synod to deny the emperor’s request. “How is it possible to number with the martyrs those who fell in battle, whom Basil the Great excluded from the sanctified elements for three years since their hands were unclean?” the synod ruled. The thirteenth canon of St. Basil of Caesarea reads, “Our fathers did not reckon killings in wars to be among murders, it seems to me, giving pardon to those who defended on behalf of chastity and piety, but perhaps it is to be well advised that those whose hands are not clean be prohibited from communion alone for three years.”<sup>51</sup> Rather than gain spiritual rewards, Byzantine soldiers ran the risk of losing rights to communion by killing in battle. It is notable that before the synod drew attention to it, this patristic canon had never been enforced, and other views persisted, particularly among those who fought and died on the frontiers.

On the basis of several military manuals preserved from the later ninth through tenth centuries, Dagron and Haralambie Mihaescu have demonstrated that the ruling of the synod directly contradicted what soldiers were told and believed.<sup>52</sup> These beliefs had been reinforced by a century of warfare in the eastern border regions against highly motivated *jihad* fighters. In the *Taktika* attributed to the emperor Leo VI (886–912), written circa 895, a clear understanding of the advantages

49 Wortley, “Legends,” 547–48. See also his abstract published in *BSCAbstr* 4 (1978): 29.

50 The synod is first noted in the late eleventh century by John Skylitzes, *Synopsis historion*, ed. J. Thurn, CFHB 5 (Berlin–New York, 1973), 274–75; and in the early twelfth century by John Zonaras, *Epitome historiarum*, ed. M. Pinder and T. Büttner-Wobst (Bonn, 1897), 3:506. It is noted again by John Zonaras in a canonical commentary, and by two further canonists: Theodore Balsamon in the twelfth century, and Matthew Blastares in the fourteenth, for which see P. Viscuso, “Christian Participation in Warfare: A Byzantine View,” in *Peace and*

*War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, SJ*, ed. T. S. Miller and J. Nesbitt (Washington, DC, 1995), 33–40, at 37–39.

51 This synod has been addressed at length by scholars concerned with the presence, or absence, of a notion of “Holy War” in Byzantium. References and commentary are provided by Viscuso, “Christian Participation in Warfare,” 33–40; J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London, 1999), 28; and K. G. Pitsakis, “Sainteté et empire: À propos de la sainteté impériale; formes de sainteté ‘d’office’ and de sainteté collective dans l’Empire d’Orient?” *Bizantinistica* 3 (2001): 203–32, at 215–16. I treat this subject more

fully in the forthcoming paper “Imperial Christianity and Sacred Warfare in Byzantium,” in *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence across Time and Tradition*, ed. J. Wellman (Lanham, MD, 2007), 83–95, where I favor those who argue against privileging only the patriarchal perspective: A. Kolia-Dermitzaki, *Ο βυζαντινός “ιερός πόλεμος”* (Athens, 1991), 132–41; T. Kolbaba, “Fighting for Christianity: Holy War in the Byzantine Empire,” *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 194–221, at 204–7.

52 G. Dagron and H. Mihaescu, *Le traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l’empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris, 1986), 284–86.

that accrued to the empire's Muslim enemies is evinced. The Arabs, it is stated, assemble for war voluntarily, since the rich are interested in spiritual rewards and the poor also in the accrual of booty. Warfare is a collective effort, whereby all members of society share in the expenses, supplying the fighting men with arms and equipment, and hence also share in the spiritual rewards of warfare. This appears to acknowledge the efficacy of Islamic *waqf* foundations, and the contemporary Byzantine problem of assembling troops and financing campaigns centrally.<sup>53</sup> Despite the usual insults leveled at Muslims, Leo considered the Islamic model to be one that the Byzantines should emulate, and realized that the cornerstones of this system would have to be replicated.<sup>54</sup> Through the tenth century, attitudes hardened and a new institutional framework was developed to pursue "permanent war," culminating in the reign of Nikephoros Phokas, when state finances were overhauled and ever more cash was directed to the war effort. Nikephoros II—like his namesake, Nikephoros I in the 811 fragment—was condemned for these "miserly" policies when, notoriously, he issued the so-called *tetarteron nomisma*, a gold coin weighing eleven twelfths of the full weight Byzantine gold coin, the *histamenon nomisma*. He appears to have collected taxes in *histamena nomismata* while paying salaries and stipends in the lighter coin.<sup>55</sup>

Nikephoros did his best to ensure that each Byzantine soldier was prepared to enjoy the same spiritual rewards as his foes, the *jihad* fighters of the emirates that had emerged at the fringes of the 'Abbāsid caliphate. *Kantatores*, heralds and chanters, were to remind soldiers of their duty to God, and assure them that their sacrifices would be commemorated forever by compatriots.<sup>56</sup> But spiritual rewards were not to be bought lightly: each soldier had to be pure for his own salvation, and also for the collective efficacy of the fighting force.<sup>57</sup> Thus three-day fasts were observed by all prior to engagements, with only a dry meal to be taken in the evening; hymns were sung and prayers of supplication were said en masse; pious utterances were orchestrated on the eve of battle and as combat was engaged; and special services were

53 M. Gil, "The Earliest *Waqf* Foundations," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57 (1998): 125–40; M. Hoexter, "*Waqf* Studies in the Twentieth Century: The State of the Art," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41 (1998): 474–95.

54 Dagron, "Byzance," 219–43 (n. 40 above).

55 This allowed the state to issue 8% more coins using the same quantity of metal. See C. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation," in *The Economic*

*History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. Laiou (Washington, DC, 2002), 3:909–66, at 931.

56 G. Dennis, "Religious Services in the Byzantine Army," in *Eulogema: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft* (Rome, 1993) = *Studia Anselmiana* 110 (1993): 107–17, at 112.

57 The importance attached to the purity and continence of soldiers who were to engage in battle is explored in a second legend emanating from the events of 811, the tale of Nicholas Monk and Soldier, for

which see Wortley, "Legends," 550–55, with references (n. 43 above). This story was first contained in the *Life of St. Nicholas the Studite*, composed ca. 900–930, and subsequently was detached and adapted for entry in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, under 24 December.

composed and conducted in the field.<sup>58</sup> It was prescribed that “whosoever is detected at the time of the litany attending to some other matter without thinking of putting all else aside to stand and offer his prayer in fear of the Lord, such a man is to be demoted from his office, is to be assigned to an inferior rank, is to be beaten, have his hair shorn and be publicly displayed.”<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, therefore, each soldier was prepared for his own demise and redemption, and according to Nikephoros Ouranos’s *Taktika*, a military manual attributed to one of Nikephoros II’s most trusted generals, the troops were to pray for the courage to fight to the death.<sup>60</sup>

Here we turn to a religious service preserved in a tenth-century document at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mt. Sinai.<sup>61</sup> The manuscript, Sinai graecus 734–35, contains a unique version of the Triodion, the liturgical book for the Easter cycle. The service in which we are interested was to be performed on Meat-fare Saturday, the first of five All Souls Saturdays during Lent. Unlike other All Souls services, this one was devoted exclusively to those who had died in battle or as prisoners of war. It was a type of veterans’ day service, but one that failed to become established in the Orthodox calendar, and is therefore otherwise unknown. The first three verses of *stichera* may be translated thus:

*Let us gather together people of Christ  
And celebrate the memory  
Of our brothers who died in battle  
And those who perished in intolerable captivity.  
Let us entreat on their behalf.*

*They were valiant until their slaughter  
Your servants, Lover of Man;  
They received  
Blows pitilessly  
Persevering in fetters;  
Let it be that these men for these things  
Achieve atonement of their souls, Lover of Man.*

<sup>58</sup> Dennis, “Religious Services,” 107–17; J. Vieillefond, “Les pratiques religieuses dans l’armée byzantine d’après les traités militaires,” *Revue des études anciennes* 37 (1935): 322–30.

<sup>59</sup> *Praecepta militaria*, 6, 2; E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon’s Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, DOS 33 (Washington, DC, 1995), 56–57.

<sup>60</sup> *Taktika*, 61, 11; McGeer, *Dragon’s*

*Teeth*, 126–27; quoted by Dennis, “Religious Services,” 116; and Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, 27 (n. 51 above).

<sup>61</sup> T. Détorakis and J. Mossay, “Un office inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le *Cod. Sin. Gr. 734–735*,” *Le Muséon* 101 (1988): 183–211; R. Taft, “War and Peace in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy,” in Miller and Nesbitt, *Peace and War*, 17–32, at 18 (n. 50 above), cites an unpublished dissertation on

this manuscript, A. Quinlan, “Sinai Greek 734–735: Triodion” (Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 1991), to which I have not had access.

*You alone who are without sin,  
Took in those  
Who are your servants,  
Illustrious generals (στρατηγούς),  
Commanding commanders (ἀρχοντας ταξιάρχας),<sup>62</sup>  
Brave soldiers (στρατιώτας),  
Judge them worthy of your repose.*

This is the type of commemoration service that Leo VI promised his troops in his *Taktika*, and that Nikephoros Phokas would have wanted for his men. In it we find parity between those who died on the field of battle and those who died in captivity. There is a clear reference to remission of sins, and no mention that either died in a state of sin. Hitherto, this service has only been dated vaguely to the late ninth or early tenth century, largely on paleographical grounds. However, a far better dating clue is provided by the references to ταξιάρχας, who in the hymn hold a position between generals and soldiers. Although ταξιάρχος (alt. ταξιάρχης) is an ancient term, it is used for the first time as a specific Byzantine rank—commander of an infantry unit numbering one thousand troops, that is, a rank between soldiers and generals—in a military manual of the later tenth century. That manual, the *Praecepta militaria*, has been dated to the reign of Nikephoros Phokas.<sup>63</sup>

The demand that those who died in battle be treated in the same manner as those taken captive was an entirely practical consideration. That is to say, if within the Byzantine tradition, those who were captured and died subsequently might receive the martyr's crown, or indeed be ransomed, what incentive was there to fight on rather than surrender? From a military perspective—and above all else, Nikephoros Phokas was a general—it may have seemed imperative to secure rights for those who fought on equal to those accorded to troops who surrendered. And it is against this insistence that Polyeuktos, patriarch of Constantinople, stood firmly, his scribes revising texts as necessary to demonstrate that never had the martyr's crown wreathed the heads of those who perished in battle, only those who died as captives. So, those taken prisoner during Nikephoros I's disastrous campaign, who were unmentioned by the original author of the *Chronicle of 811*, had emerged by the later tenth century as victims of strangulation, beheading, and stoning to death, and thus worthy of the status that had been bestowed upon them.

It is our conjecture, therefore, that if one must seek a context for the modification of the 811 fragment, then the 960s can be recommended for a number of reasons. First, the similarities between the language employed in the fragment and that of the entry in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* demonstrate that those researching and summarizing

<sup>62</sup> Adding a comma between ἀρχοντας and ταξιάρχας would allow for the alternative translation “officers, commanders.”

<sup>63</sup> I owe this observation to Denis Sullivan and Alice-Mary Talbot. See McGeer, *Dragon's Teeth*, 16–17, 52–53.

lives for the liturgical compilation were aware of the fragment, the bulk of which was recorded soon after the events it describes. If, as the latest research suggests, the *Synaxarion* was written down first in the years of Constantine VII's restoration (945–959) and its immediate aftermath, one might suggest that the modification of the fragment took place around the same time. That this was a period of extensive modification and rewriting is demonstrated most clearly by the corpus of Metaphrastic hagiography.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the central issue in the fragment's final, interpolated passage is the martyrdom of prisoners of war, which issue came to the fore in the later tenth century, and in particular during the reign of Nikephoros Phokas. Finally, one might note that the entente between Byzantium and Bulgaria, established in 927 by the marriage of Tsar Peter to Maria Lekapena, granddaughter of the reigning emperor, began to fray during the reign of Nikephoros. This was but one more reason for the status of those killed by Bulgarians in 811 to be reconsidered.<sup>65</sup>

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64 C. Høgel, "Hagiography under the Macedonians: The Two Recensions of the Metaphrastic Menologion," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. P. Magdalino (Leiden, 2003), 217–32.

65 P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000), 47–51.